

Supporting our veterans brick-by-brick

Juanice Evans is executive director of the Kemper County Chamber of Commerce. Here she writes about the origins of the Kemper County Chamber of Commerce Veterans Memorial Walk. The brick walkway is laid around the Kemper County Courthouse in DeKalb, and each brick is engraved with the name of a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Anyone wishing to buy a brick may stop by the chamber office in the Business Incubator on Highway 16 West in DeKalb, or call Juanice Evans at her office, (601) 743-2754.

By Juanice Evans
special to The Star

In 1990, the DeKalb postmaster, Henry Long, asked me why the chamber of commerce had not built a Veteran's Memorial. The chamber's board of directors was 100 percent for the project.

Long, a Vietnam veteran, had seen a memorial with engraved bricks in Picayune.

On July 4, 1991, we had a Veterans Parade down Main Street in DeKalb. The 367th Maintenance Company of the Mississippi Army National Guard furnished jeeps and other Army vehicles for veterans from World War I through Desert Storm.

The ground-breaking was held on the courthouse square in downtown DeKalb.

The Mississippi Forestry Department gave us a grant to landscape the lawns, and the county and city all worked to get the place where we are today — with about 1,000 engraved bricks in the Kemper County Chamber of Commerce Veterans Memorial Walk.

When we announced our plans for the walkway, the first person to call us was U.S. Rep. G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery, now retired. He was so excited and always

FALLEN HEROES



Ladd



Stovall

Juanice Evans said the memorial walkway in DeKalb honors veterans, both young and old:

"We have recently welcomed home the 367th Maintenance Company after more than a year in Iraq. While there, they lost two members of their unit, Joshua Ladd and Matthew Stovall. We put Josh's brick in the walkway and we will lay Matthew's brick as well."

"To quote Harold Cross, adjutant general of the Mississippi National Guard, 'Each person in the unit is a true hero.'"

"Joshua and Matthew gave their lives for all of us. Say a prayer for the parents and family of lost veterans."

very supportive of Kemper County.

His successor, U.S. Rep. Chip Pickering, has always been with us during our July 4th Celebration and Veteran's Service. Naval Air Station Meridian commanders and pilots always make our service special.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

MEMORIAL WALK

Juanice Evans, left, and Harry Russell lay bricks to honor veterans along the Kemper County Chamber of Commerce Veterans Memorial Walk on the Kemper County Courthouse square in DeKalb.

We owe all veterans a huge debt of gratitude for protecting the United States and each person's freedom to choose where they live, worship and raise their families.

When you see veterans, tell them how much you appreciate them.

Harry Russell laid almost all of the brick in the walkway. He can tell you something about almost everyone hon-

ored there. No one could have laid the brick with any more expertise and care than Harry. Joe VanDevender and Freddie Gully are taking up where Harry left off.

Craig's coming home at last

Annette Hayes submitted this "Bragging Rights" story about her son, Sgt. Craig Proaps of the Mississippi Army National Guard's 186th Aviation Group, Company G, in Meridian. Craig and his wife, Shelby, live in Collinsville and they have a 4-year-old son, Carter.

Craig is a full-time Guardsman, but also works part-time at Suncoast Motion Picture Company at Bonita Lakes Mall. Deployed to the Sunni Triangle area of Iraq in March 2004, he was scheduled to return home Feb. 18.

By Annette Hayes
special to The Star

If you want to meet someone who is thoughtful, kind and considerate, then you should meet my son, Craig.

He is intelligent but would



SUBMITTED PHOTO

GOOD-NATURED

Sgt. Craig Proaps' mother, Annette Hayes, says her son can get along with almost anybody: "He is always in a pleasant mood unless you push his button a few hundred times — and even then, he is more pleasant than most people I know."

never throw it up to you. He graduated as the salutatorian of West Lauderdale High School. He really loves being at home with his wife and 4-year-old son.

His son thinks his dad is the greatest because he will get on the floor and play with him. He likes cutting the grass with his dad and washing the car. They get on the computer together and play games on their Playstation 2. He says his dad is funny because he hides chicken nuggets in his hamburger.

Talk about a movie buff, I don't think you could name one that he hasn't seen or doesn't know about.

Well, I don't think you will meet too many dads who will change the big "nasty" diaper, give the baby a bath and feed him,

too, without fussing. Fact is, Craig seldom ever fusses. He is always in a pleasant mood unless you push his button a few hundred times — and even then, he is more pleasant than most people I know.

Of course, Craig would much rather help you figure out just how long a ditch should be dug and the angle it should be made for drainage than to actually dig it himself. He will eat just about anything you put in front of him at least once, but if you don't feel like cooking, he will be more than happy to wolf down a bowl of popcorn. He has a quick wit about him and can get along with even the most aggravating people.

You ask me how I know? He is still putting up with me, his mother.